

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

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SY-05 MED-02 HEW-04 IO-13 AID-05 /107 W

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R 140915Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2292

INFO CINCPAC

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMCONSUL MANDALAY

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

DEA BANGKOK

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 3157

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9. SMUGGLING NOTES: CURRY POWDER AND TIRES

1. COUP PLOT TRIAL BEGINS (LOU)

THE BURMESE PRESS ON SEPTEMBER 11 CARRIED LENGTHY ACCOUNTS OF THE INITIAL PROCEEDINGS IN THE TRIAL OF THE EIGHT ACCUSED COUP PLOTTERS (RANGOON 3131). THE OFFICIAL VERSION IS SUBSTANTIALLY AS WE HAD EARLIER REPORTED, BUT A FEW DETAILS WERE FURTHER CLARIFIED:

-- THE TWO ACCUSED PRINCIPAL CONSPIRATORS (CAPTAINS OHN KYAW MYINT AND WIN THEIN) ARE CHARGED UNDER SECTION 122 (1) OF THE PENAL CODE (HIGH TREASON) AND UNDER SECTIONS 3 AND 4 OF THE "LAW SAFEGUARDING THE COUNTRY'S LEADING PARTY." THE FORMER IS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH; THE LATTER BY 3-14 YEARS IMPRISONMENT.

-- FIVE OTHER OFFICERS (COL. HLA PE, MAJ. SEIN MYINT, CAPT. BA CHIT, CAPT. SAN KYI, AND CAPT. TUN KYAW) ARE CHARGED UNDER SECTION 123 OF THE PENAL CODE (ABETMENT OF HIGH TREASON -- PUNISHABLE BY "TRANSPORTATION FOR LIFE" OR "RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT" FOR UP T 10 YEARS) AND UNDER SECTIONS 3 AND 4 OF THE "LAW SAFEGUARDING THE COUNTRY'S LEADING PARTY."

-- EX-GENERAL TIN OO IS CHARGED UNDER SECTION 124 OF THE PENAL CODE (MISPRISION OF HIGH TREASON, I.E., KNOWLEDGE OF IT AND FAILURE TO REPORT IT -- PUNISHABLE BY RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT FOR UP TO 7 YEARS).

-- THE TWO PRINCIPAL CONSPIRATORS WERE TOLD THAT THE STATE WOULD PROVIDE THEM A LAWYER IF THEY WISHED, BUT THEY COUOD ALSO ENGAGE THEIR OWN LAWYERS; THE OTHERS WERE INFORMED THAT THEY MUST HIRE LAWYERS THEMSELVES.

-- THE CASE IS BEING TRIED BY THE RANGOON DIVISION COURT, WITH THREE JUDGES SITTING.

-- THE CONSPIRATORS ALLEDGEDLY PLANNED TO ASSASSINATE PRESIDENT NE WIN, BSPP GENERAL SECRETARY GEN. SAN YU, AND NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE BUREAU CHIEF COL. TIN OO, FIRST AT AN ARMED FORCES DAY DINNER MARCH 27, THEN AGAIN AT A MEETING IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY MARCH 29-30, AT A BSPP CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING IN JUNE, AT A MILITARY COMMANDER'S CONFERENCE IN JUNE, AND FINALLY AT THE AIRPORT WHEN NEXT NE WIN DEPARTED FOR ABROAD.
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TRIAL PROCEEDINGS ARE SCHEDULED TO RESUME SEPTEMBER 15.

2. UNIVERSITIES TO REOPEN (LOU)

THE GUB ANNOUNCED SEPTEMBER 13 THAT ALL UNIVERSITIES AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS IN BURMA, CLOSED SINCE MARCH 2, WILL REOPEN ON OCTOBER 1. THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS PRECEDED BY A SERIES OF MEASURES TO CONTROL FUTURE

DISTURBANCES AMONG STUDENTS AND FACULTY. UNDESIRABLE STUDENTS (I.E., POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, DRUG USERS, ETC.) HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY LETTER THAT THEY MAY NOT APPLY FOR REGISTRATION. STUDENTS PERMITTED TO REGISTER, AND THEIR PARENTS, MUST SIGN PLEDGES OF GOOD BEHAVIOR BEFORE THEY WILL BE READMITTED. A SERIES OF DRACONIAN REGULATIONS FOR BOTH STUDENTS AND FACULTY HAVE ALSO BEEN ISSUED, UNDER WHICH EVEN MILDLY DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR CAN BE SEVERELY PUNISHED.

COMMENT: AT LEAST ONE UNIVERSITY TEACHER HAS REMARKED THAT THE NEW CODE REPRESENTS ONLY AN OFFICIAL FORMULATION OF LONGSTANDING GUB POLICY.

3. MONKS MEET IN MANDALAY (LOU)

ABOUT 600 MONKS MET IN MANDALAY THE AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 31 TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF BUDDHISM IN BURMA. CHIEF TOPICS DISCUSSED WERE REPORTEDLY THE NEED TO ELIMINATE ROWDY ELEMENTS AND FALSE MONKS FROM THE RANKS OF THE SANGHA, AND TIGHTENING UP STANDARDS ON THE VARIOUS STATE EXAMS ADMINISTERED TO THE MONKS TO ASSESS THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF PALI AND THE BUDDHIST RELIGION. THE EXAMS ARE ALSO PREREQUISITES FOR ADVANCEMENT WITHIN THE SANGHA. AS THE MEETING WAS ATTENDED BY GUB OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH RELIGION AND A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF IT WAS CARRIED IN THE HANTHAWADDY PRESS SEPTEMBER 1, THE MEETING MUST HAVE HAD THE GUB'S BLESSING.

COMMENT: IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THERE WERE REASONS OTHER THAN THOSE OFFICIALLY STATED FOR THE MEETING; GUB CONCERN THAT THE RANKS OF THE SANGHA MAY CONCEAL DISSIDENT ELEMENTS WHO MIGHT BE EXPOSED BY A THOROUGH HOUSECLEANING MAY HAVE PLAYED A ROLE. THERE WAS ALSO A REPORTED ANTI-COMMUNIST TINGE TO THE MEETING.
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USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY VIEMTIANE

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4. REACTION TO MAO'S DEATH (LOU)

BURMESE REACTION TO THE DEATH OF CHAIRMAN MAO HAS BEEN PROPERLY SYMPATHETIC BUT LESS THAN EFFUSIVE. NEWSPAPERS HAVE DEVOTED EXTENSIVE SPACE TO WIRE SERVICE REPORTS OF FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS, FOREIGN REACTION, ETC., BUT THERE HAVE BEEN NO EDITORIALS. NE WIN SENT BRIEF BUT WARM CONDOLENCE MESSAGES TO HUA KUO-FENG AND WU TEH, IN HIS CAPACITY AS BSPP CHAIRMAN AS WELL AS CHIEF OF STATE, AND A MORE PERSONAL NOTE TO MADAME MAO. NEITHER OF NE WIN'S MESSAGES, HOWEVER, WERE AS LENGTHY, AS PERSONAL, OR AS WARM AND FULL OF PRAISE AS THE ARTICLE HE WROTE AND HAD PUBLISHED AT THE TIME OF CHOU EN-LAI'S
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DEATH LAST JANUARY AND HIS MESSAGE T MAO ON THAT OCCASION. PRIME MINISTER U SEIN WIN AND FOREIGN MINISTER U NLA PHONE SENT BRIEF MESSAGES TO THEIR PRC COUNTERPARTS, HUA KUO-FENG AND CHIAO KUAN-HUA.

LOCALLY, THE PRC EMBASSY OPENED A CONDOLENCE BOOK, WHICH WAS SIGNED BY PRIME MINISTER SEIN WIN AND BY U THAUNG KYI, BSPP JOINT GENERAL SECRETARY. ALTHOUGH THE EMBASSY WAS NOT A RECIPIENT OF THE CIRCULAR NOTE INFORMING MISSIONS OF THE BOOK, THE AMBASSADOR SIGNED IT.

BCP RADIO BROADCAST THE BCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S
CONDOLENCE MESSAGE TO THE CCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE. A
PREDICTABLE AND LENGTHY PAEAN TO MAO, IT EXPRESSED
DETERMINATION TO "APPLY OURSELVES TO THE STUDY OF
MARXISM-LENINISM-MAO TSE-TUNG THOUGHT" SO AS TO BRING
ABOUT THE REVOLUTION IN BURMA AND TO "COMPLETELY
WIPE OUT ON THE EARTH IMPERIALISM, SOCIAL IMPERIALISM,
REVISIONISM, AND ALL REACTION."

5. PETROLEUM NOTES: NOTHING NEW (LOU)

ESSO HAS REACHED A DEPTH OF NEARLY 9,500 FEET IN ITS
SEVENTH HOLE LOCATED ABOUT 80 MILES OFFSHORE FROM
TAVOY. NO ENCOURAGING SIGNS OF HYDROCARBONS HAVE BEEN
FOUND, AND ESSO WOULD PREFER TO CEASE OPERATIONS AND
MOVE ON TO ITS EIGHT AND FINAL DRILLING SITE. HOWEVER,
MYANMA OIL CORPORATION IS INSISTING ON FURTHER TESTS
AND URGING THAT DRILLING BE CONTINUED ANOTHER 3,000
FEET. IF ESSO HAS ITS WAY, THE RIG, ATWOOD'S FREDRICKS-
BURG, WILL SHORTLY MOVE TO A NEW SITE ABOUT 30 MILES
SOUTHWEST OF THE PRESENT HOLE. ESSO'S TARGET FOR THIS
FINAL HOLE IS TO DRILL TO 10,000 FEET IN 42 DAYS.

6. NARCOTICS: ARRESTS AND SEIZURES (UNCL)

THE CUSTOMS CHECKPOINT AT HSIPAW, MIDWAY BETWEEN
MANDALAY AND LASHIO, CONTINUES TO BE A DETERRENT TO
SMALL SCALE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. PRESS ACCOUNTS
REPORTED THAT A BUS PASSENGER WAS ARRESTED WHEN CUSTOMS
OFFICERS DISCOVERED OPIUM POWDER VALUED AT K 10,500
CONCEALED IN HIS BELONGINGS.

7. PLAGUE OUTBREAKS (UNCL)

RELIABLE SOURCES INDICATE THAT THERE HAVE BEEN THREE
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RODENT DIE-OFFS RECENTLY NEAR PROME, ABOUT 120 MILES
NORTH OF RANGOON. THESE DIE-OFFS, SERIOLOGICALLY
CONFIRMED AS DUE TO PLAGUE, OFTEN PRECEDE OUTBREAKS
OF PLAGUE IN HUMANS. IN A SEPARATE INCIDENT, WHO
HAS CONFIRMED THE EXISTENCE OF AT LEAST ONE HUMAN
PLAGUE CASE IN RANGOON.

8. MOTION PICTURE GUIDANCE AND SELF-CRITICISM AIRED (UNCL)

ALL NEWSPAPERS ENDED A TEN-PART AIRING OF THE INFOR-
MATION MINISTRY'S 9-POINT GUIDANCE TO MOTION PICTURE
PERSONNEL AND THEIR RESPONSES IN SUGGESTING ACTIONS
TOWARD CONSTRUCTION OF A SOCIALIST SOCIETY AND THE
PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL CULTURAL VALUES. ALTHOUGH
MANY SUGGESTIONS WERE GIVEN ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE
MINISTER'S GUIDANCE, MANY OF THE STATEMENTS DEALT
INSTEAD WITH PROBLEMS OF THE INDUSTRY -- LACK OF FILM

STOCK, ANTIQUATED EQUIPMENT, STUBBORN OR ARROGANT MOVIE STARS, LACK OF UNDERSTANDING BY CENSORS, ETC.

EDITORIALS PRAISED THE SYMPOSIUM, ALTHOUGH THE WORKING PEOPLE'S DAILY NOTED THAT "NOT A FEW DIGRESSED FROM THE CENTRAL TOPIC." IN GENERAL, EDITORIALS CALLED ON WRITERS AND JOURNALISTS TO DO THEIR DUTY AND FOLLOW IN THE PATH OF CINEMA ARTISTES IN REGARD TO THEIR CULTURAL PURSUITS.

THE INFORMATION MINISTRY, HAVING LAID DOWN EXPLICIT GUIDELINES ON CONTENT, LANGUAGE, MUSIC AND DRESS IN THE MOVIES, HAS MADE IT CLEAR WHICH KINDS OF PRODUCTIONS IN THE FUTURE WILL BE PERMITTED.

9. SMUGGLING NOTES: CURRY POWDER AND TIRES (LOU)
LAST WEEK THE GUB ISSUED A WARNING THAT SOME 36,000 POUNDS OF CURRY POWDER RECENTLY SMUGGLED INTO BURMA FROM THAILAND AND NOW BEING SOLD ON THE BLACK MARKET IS UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION. ACCORDING TO THE GUB, ABOUT 1,000 T-SHIRTS EMBLAZONED WITH ADVERTISING FOR THE CURRY POWDER WERE ALSO SMUGGLED IN WITH THE SHIPMENT. WHILE WE ARE UNABLE TO COMMENT AS TO WHETHER THE HEALTH HAZARD IS REAL OR A PLOY BY THE GUB TO DISCOURAGE FURTHER SMUGGLING, THE REPORTED VOLUME OF SUCH A MUNDANE ITEM AS CURRY POWDER, TOGETHER WITH PROMOTIONAL T-SHIRTS, GIVE SOME INDICATION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE ILLICIT
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TRADE THAT EXISTS BETWEEN BURMA AND THAILAND. ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE EFFECTS OF SMUGGLING WAS REPORTED BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF A U.S. TIRE COMPANY. HE RELATED THAT THE COMPANY'S DISTRIBUTOR IN CHIANG MAI HAD ASKED IF THE FIRM COULD PROVIDE LIGHTER WEIGHT TIRES, COMPARABLE TO THOSE MADE BY A JAPANESE COMPETITOR. THE COMPANY REPLIED THAT ITS TIRES WERE MADE TO CERTAIN HIGH SPECIFICATIONS WHICH, ALTHOUGH MAKING INITIAL COST HIGHER AND WEIGHT HEAVIER, ALSO MADE THEM WEAR LONGER AND HENCE MORE ECONOMICAL THAN THE COMPETING BRAND - THE USUAL SALES PITCH. THE DISTRIBUTOR WAS UNIMPRESSED. HE POINTED OUT THAT A PACK ANIMAL COULD CARRY SIX OF THE LIGHTER JAPANESE TIRES INOT BURMA WHEREAS IT COULD ONLY CARRY FOUR OF THE AMERICAN BRAND. AND THAT, SAID THE DISTRIBUTOR, ISIOHE ONLY SELLING POINT HIS CUSTOMERS WERE INTERESTED IN.
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